UNIT 26 MARXISM

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26.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will read about the theory and practice of Marxism, propounded by Karl Marx and others. The basic tenets of the philosophy comprising of dialectical and historical materialism, the theory of surplus value, class struggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat and communism are discussed at length. After going through the unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the pre-Marxian strands of socialism such as utopian socialism;
- Enumerate, describe and discuss the basic postulates of Marxism;
- Comment on other important components of the Marxist theory such as the theories of alienation and freedom and finally; and
- Critique Marxism as well as comment on its contemporary relevance.

26.1 INTRODUCTION

The present unit aims at examining and explaining the principles of Marxism, which is the most revolutionary ideology of our age. Along with liberalism, Marxism ranks as the most important philosophy of our time. Liberalism, Idealism and Marxism are the three important theories of Political Science. C.L Wayper has divided various views regarding the state into three parts, viz., the state as a machine, as an organism and as a class. In other words, the organic view of the state, the mechanistic view of the state and the class view of the state. The organic view is idealism, the mechanistic view is liberalism and the class view is marxism.

The present unit is subdivided into the definition of Marxism, Utopian and Scientific Socialism, Revolutionary and Evolutionary Socialism, the main principles of Marxism, a critique and a conclusion. The main principles of Marxism, are seven, viz., Dialectical

Materialism, Historical Materialism, Theory of Surplus Value, Class Struggle, Revolution, Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Communism. The concept of Alienation and freedom generally associated with younger Marx or the humanist face of Marxism have also been dealt with.

26.2 WHAT IS MARXISM?

Marxism generally refers to the ideas of the German philosopher, Karl Marx. But Marxism does not mean exclusively the ideas of Marx. It includes the ideas of Marx, Friedrich Engels and their supporters, who call themselves Marxists. Thus, Marxism refers to the body of ideas, which predominantly contains the ideas of Karl Marx. Marxism is a living philosophy. Marxist thinkers are continuously contributing to the philosophy of Marxism. Thus, it is said that Marx is dead, but Marxism is still alive.

The Marxist philosophy existed even before the birth of Karl Marx. This is the reason David Mclellan has written three volumes on Marxism, viz., *Marxism before Marx*; *Thought of Karl Marx* and *Marxism after Marx*. Similarly, the Polish thinker Leszek Kolakowski has authored three volumes on Marxism. The point once again is that Marxism does not mean only the ideas of Karl Marx.

26.2.1 Utopian and Scientific Socialism

As said earlier, Marxism existed before Marx. These are known as the early socialist thinkers. Karl Marx calls them Utopian Socialists. They were utopian, because their diagnosis of the social ills was correct, but their remedy was wrong. It was impracticable, and therefore, they were called utopian. The world 'utopia' was derived from a novel of Thomas Moore titled, 'Utopia.' It refers to an imaginary island, called Utopia, where a perfect socio-economic- political system existed. There was no exploitation and people were happy. Some important utopian socialist thinkers are Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Louis Blanc, Saint Simon, Sismondi and Proudhon.

Marx calls his socialism as 'Scientific Socialism'. It is scientific, because it offers the economic interpretation of history by using the scientific methodology of dialectical materialism. It explains not only the true causes of exploitation, but also offers the scientific remedy of revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat to cure the social ills of exploitation. It not only offers scientific reasons for class division and also struggle in society, but also provides for a scientific mechanism to establish a classless and exploitation less society.

26.2.2 Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism

Socialism is further divided into evolutionary and revolutionary socialism. Evolutionary socialism does not believe in revolution and wants to attain socialism through peaceful means. Evolutionary Socialists have faith in parliamentary democracy and want to bring social change through the ballot. They eschew violence and so, are opposed to a violent revolution. They also do not subscribe to the dictatorship of the proletariat and advocate a peaceful democratic transition from a class divided to a classless society. Fabian Socialism, Guild Socialism, Democratic Socialism are all various types of evolutionary socialism.

Revolutionary socialism, on the other hand, believes in class struggle, revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to them, social change cannot be peaceful. It has to be violent. A peaceful revolution is a contradiction in terms. Revolution is the midwife of social change, and this revolution must be violent. Revolutionary Marxism is generally identified with the scientific socialism of Karl Marx. Syndicalism is also a type of revolutionary socialism.

Evolutionary socialism also traces its roots from the ideas of Karl Marx and Engels. They have talked about the withering away of the state. Exponents of evolutionary socialism have picked up the theory of withering away of the state, and argued that gradually through peaceful means, social change can be effected and an exploitationless and classless society can be established. However, the critics of evolutionary socialism do not accept this thesis, and argue that the idea of withering away of the state applies only to the socialist state or the dictatorship of the proletariat and not to the capitalist state. It will never wither away. It has to be smashed through a violent revolution. Therefore, the logic of evolutionary socialism is flawed.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Distinguish between Utopian and Scientific Socialism.

Or

Distinguish between Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism.

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26.3 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM

The basic tenets of Marxism are the following: dialectical materialism, historical materialism, the theory of surplus value, class struggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat and communism. Now, these principles will be discussed in detail.

26.3.1 Dialectical Materialism

Dialectical materialism is the scientific methodology developed by Marx and Engels for the interpretation of history. Here, Marx has borrowed heavily from his predecessors, particularly, the Geman philosopher Hegel. Dialectics is a very old methodology, employed to discover truth by exposing contradictions, through a clash of opposite ideas. Hegel refined it by developing the trilogy of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. It is popularly known as the *Dialectical Triad*. Progress or growth takes place through the dialectical process. At every stage of growth, it is characterised by contradictions. These contradictions induce further changes, progress, and development. The thesis is challenged by its anti-thesis. Both contain elements of truth and falsehood. Truth is permanent, but falsehood is transitory. In the ensuing conflict of the thesis and the anti-thesis, the truth remains, but the false elements are destroyed. These false elements constitute contradictions. The true elements of both the thesis and the anti-thesis are fused together in a synthesis. This evolved synthesis during the course of time becomes a thesis and so, it is again challenged by its opposite anti-thesis, which again results in a synthesis. This process of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis continues until the stage of perfection is reached. In this evolutionary process, a stage will come, when there will be no false elements. These will be destroyed at different stages of evolution. Ultimately, only the truth remains,

because it is never destroyed. It will constitute the perfect stage and there will be no contradictions and so, there will be no further growth. The dialectical process will come to an end after arriving at the perfect truth. It is the contradictions, which move the dialectical process and a complete elimination of contradictions marks the end of the dialectical process itself.

For materialism, Marx is highly indebted to the French school of materialism, mainly the French materialist thinker Ludwig Feuerbach. It is the matter, which is the ultimate reality and not the idea. The latter is a reflection of the former. How we earn our bread determines our ideas. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness. Marx has observed that "Hegel's dialectics was standing on its head and I have put it on its feet". Hegel has developed dialectical idealism. For him, it is the idea, which ultimately matters. Idea lies in the base or the sub-structure, which determines everything in the superstructure. Society, polity, economy are in this superstructure which is shaped by the prevalent dominant ideas of the age. Ultimately it is the idea, which matters, and the other things are only its reflection. Marx replaced idea with matter. According to Marx, the material or the economic forces are in the substructure and the idea is a part of the superstructure. Idea is the reflection of material forces. The economic forces determine the idea and not vice-versa. Thus, Marx has reversed the position of idea and matter. This is the reason that he claims that "in Hegel it was upside down and I have corrected it".

The base or the substructure consists of the forces of production and the relations of production. These two together constitute the mode of production. When there is a change in the forces of production because of development in technology, it brings changes in the relations of production. Thus, a change in the mode of production brings a corresponding change in the superstructure. Society, polity, religion, morals, values, norms, etc. are a part of the superstructure and shaped by the mode of production.

26.3.2 Historical Materialism

Historical materialism is the application of dialectical materialism to the interpretation of history. It is the economic interpretation of world history by applying the Marxian methodology of dialectical materialism. The world history has been divided into four stages: primitive communism, the slavery system, feudalism and capitalism.

Primitive communism refers to the earliest part of human history. It was a propertyless, exploitationless, classless and stateless society. Means of production were backward, because technology was undeveloped. The community owned the means of production. They were not under private ownership and so there was no exploitation. Stone made hunting weapons, the fishing net and hooks were the means of production. The entire community owned these. Production was limited and meant for self-consumption. There was no surplus production and so there was no private property. Since there was no private property, there was no exploitation. Since there was no exploitation, there was no class division. Since there was no class division, there was no class struggle. Since there was no class struggle, there was no state. It was, thus, a communist society, but of a primitive type. Though life was difficult, it was characterised by the absence of exploitation, conflict and struggle.

Technology is not static; it evolves continuously. Technological development results in the improvement of production. This leads to surplus production, which results in the emergence of private property. Means of production are now not under the community, but private ownership. Society is, thus, divided into property owning and propertyless classes. By virtue of the ownership of the means of production, the property owning class exploits the propertyless class. Class division in society and exploitation lead to class struggle. Since there is class struggle, the dominant class, that is the property

owning class creates an institution called the state to suppress the dissent of the dependent class, that is the propertyless class. Thus, the state is a class instrument and a coercive institution. It protects the interests of its creator, that is the property owning class.

In the beginning, this society is divided into masters and slaves. Masters are the haves and the slaves are the have nots. The slaves carry out all the production work. The masters live on the labour of slaves. They exploit the slaves and whenever the slaves resent, the state comes to the rescue of the masters. Thus, the state serves the interests of the master class. It uses its coercive powers to suppress the voice of the slaves.

The slave system is succeeded by feudalism. Technological development leads to changes in the means of production and this brings about corresponding changes in the relations of production and the superstructure. The slave system is replaced by the feudal mode of production and it is reflected in the society, polity, morality and the value system. The division of society into feudal lords and peasants characterises feudalism. The feudal lords own the means of production, that is land, but the peasants carry out the production work. By virtue of ownership of the land, the feudal lords get a huge share of the produce without doing anything. Thus, the feudal lords are like parasites, who thrive on the labour of peasants. Feudal lords exploit the peasants and if the peasants ever resist their exploitation, their resistance is ruthlessly crushed by the state, which protects and serves the interests of the feudal lords. The peasants are a dependent and exploited class, whereas the lords are a dominant and exploiting class.

Capitalism succeeds feudalism. Technological development continues and so there is change in the forces of production, which leads to a mismatch between the forces of production and the relations of production, which is resolved through a bourgeois revolution. Thus the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production is resolved. The feudal mode of production is replaced by the capitalist mode of production. Division of society into the bourgeois and the proletariat class characterises capitalism. The bourgeois class owns the means of production, but the proletariat class carries out the production. Proletariats are the industrial workers. They sell their labour in lieu of meager wages. It is usually a subsistence wage, which is sufficient only to support them and their families, so that an uninterrupted supply of labour force can be maintained. Production is not for consumption by the self, but for profit. The desire to maximise profit leads to a reduction in wages and a rise in working hours. This further deteriorates the lot of the working class, which is eventually pushed into a situation, where it has nothing to loose except its chains. This paves the way for the proletariat revolution.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Explain in your own words the meaning of Dialectical Materialism.

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2) Enumerate and describe the salient features of either primitive communism or feudalism.

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26.3.3 Theory of Surplus Value

Marx has developed the theory of surplus value to explain the exploitation in the capitalist society. Here, Marx was influenced by the theories of classical economists. He subscribed to the labour theory of value. The value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labour consumed in its production. Labour is also a commodity. It can be bought and sold like other commodities. Out of the four factors of production, labour is the most vital. In its absence, the other factors of production are useless. Land, capital and organisation are the other factors of production. It is the application of labour to these factors of production, which makes them productive. In the absence of labour, they are sterile.

If a wage is paid in proportion to the amount of value created by a labourer, then there is no exploitation, But this is not the case in capitalism. Labour is unique in the sense that it creates more value than is required for its maintenance. The difference between the value created by the worker and the value paid to the worker, as wages, constitute the surplus value and the profit of the capitalist. For instance, if a worker has created a value of say Rs. 25,000 in a month and has been paid Rs. 15,000 as wages, then the remaining Rs. 10,000 will constitute the profit of the capitalist. Thus, the worker always creates more value than he is actually paid. This surplus value created by the worker is the profit of the bourgeois, which has been defended by the classical economist, because it leads to capital accumulation, which is invested further in new industries and enterprises and leads to growth and prosperity. For the Marxists, it is the exploitation of the workers, which has to be abolished.

With the growth of capitalism and the rise in competition, the wages of the workers continue to fall and reach the stage of subsistence level. Subsistence wage is the minimum possible wage; beyond this the wage cannot be reduced. It is the minimum possible wage for the survival and perpetuation of the labour force. Thus, cut throat competition in capitalism leads to deterioration of the lot of the proletariat. This intensifies class struggle and eventually leads to revolution.

26.3.4 Class Struggle

According to Marx, the history of all hitherto existing society has been the history of class struggle. Except the primitive communist stage, all historical ages have been characterised by the antagonism between the dominant and dependent classes or the haves and the have nots. This antagonism is caused by class contradictions; it is the result of exploitation by the property owning class of the property less class. Throughout history, there have been two contending classes in every epoch. In the slavery system, they were the masters and the slaves, in feudalism, the feudal lords and the peasants and in capitalism, the bourgeois and the proletariat. The masters, the feudal lords and the bourgeois are the owners of the means of production. However, it is the slaves, the peasants and the proletariat, who carry out production,

but their produce is taken away by their exploiters and in return, they are given just enough for their survival. By virtue of the ownership of the means of production, the property owning class exploits the propertyless class. This is the main source and cause of class struggle. The interests of the contending classes are irreconcilable. No compromise or rapprochement is possible between the contending classes. The inherent contradictions of contending classes of every epoch can be resolved only through the annihilation of the exploiting classes.

26.3.5 Revolution

Class struggle paves the way for revolution. Class struggle is imperceptible, but revolution is perceptible. Intensification of class struggle prepares the ground for revolution. Class struggle is a long drawn affair, but revolution is short, swift and violent. In the words of Marx, 'revolution is the indispensable mid-wife of social change'. Transition from one historical stage to another occurs through revolution. Feudal revolution brought an end to the slavery system; the bourgeois revolution ended feudalism and the proletariat revolution will bring an end to capitalism. Thus, any epoch making social change is always brought about by a revolution.

Revolution occurs when there is incompatibility between the means or forces of production and the relations of production. To resolve this incompatibility, revolution occurs, which brings corresponding changes in the relations of production and the superstructure to make it compatible with the forces or means of production. Technological development brings changes in the means of production. The handmill gives you a society with the feudal lord, and the steam-mill, a society with the industrial capitalist.

Proletarian revolution will be the last revolution in the annals of history. Revolution occurs to resolve contradictions. So revolution will not take place, if there is no contradiction in society. After the proletarian revolution, there will not be any further revolution, because there will be no contradiction. However, revolution will take place only when the forces of production have fully matured. Revolution cannot be advanced or postponed. It will occur when the forces of production have matured and do not match the relations of production. Revolution brings an end to this mismatch.

The sequence and direction of social evolution cannot be changed. No stage can overleap an other stage. No stage can be short-circuited. Primitive communism will lead to the slavery system, the slavery system to feudalism and feudalism to capitalism. Dictatorship of the proletariat or socialism will succeed capitalism, which is the penultimate stage of social evolution. Dictatorship of the proletariat will eventually lead to the establishment of communism. With the proletarian revolution, revolution itself will come to an end.

26.3.6 Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The proletariat revolution will lead to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is also known as the *socialist state*. The state apparatus created by the bourgeois to oppress the proletariat will be taken over by the proletariat themselves. Now, the table will be turned and the proletariat will use the state apparatus against the bourgeois. The bourgeois will try to stage a counter-revolution to restore the old system and so, the coercive institutions of the state are needed to restrain the bourgeois.

The state has always been the instrument of oppression. The dominant class to oppress the dependent class has created the state. It is a class instrument. The state protects and serves the interests of its creator, which is the property owning class. This class has always been in a minority, whether it is the masters or the feudal lords or the capitalists. Thus, a minority has been oppressing a majority viz., the slaves or

the peasants or the proletariat through the coercive organs of the state. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the first time the state comes under the control of the majority. Now, for the first time, the state's coercive apparatus is used by the majority against the minority.

According to Marx, all states have been dictatorships and so the socialist state is no exception. It is also a dictatorship. The state has always been used by one class to suppress the other class. In the socialist state, the proletariat class will use the coercive organs of the state such as the army, the police, prison, judicial system etc., against the bourgeois class. Marx argues that if democracy means the rule of the majority, then the proletariat state is the most democratic state, because for the first time in the annals of history, power comes into the hands of the majority. Before the proletariat state, power has always been in the hands of the minority. So if majority rule is the criterion, then only the proletariat state can be called a democratic state.

26.3.7 Communism

Under the living care of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialist state will blossom forth into communism. Socialism is a transitory stage. It will pave the way for the eventual emergence of communism. Which is stable and permanent. This will be the phase of social evolution. After the establishment of communism, there will be no further social change. The dialectical process will come to an end. A perfect, rational social system will be established, free from antagonisms and contradictions. There will be no class contradictions and so, no class struggle. Infact communism will be a classless, stateless, private propertyless and exploitationless society.

In a communist society, there will be no private property in the form of private ownership of the means of production. The means of production will be under the ownership of the community. Cooperation and not cutthroat competition will be the basis of communist society. Production will be for consumption and not to earn profit. Profit motive will be replaced by social needs. Since there will be no private property, there will be no exploitation. Since there will be no exploitation, there will be no class division, no property owning and propertyless class, no haves and have nots or no dominant and dependent class. Since there is no class division, there is no class struggle and so no need of the state. This is the reason why a communist society will be a classless and stateless society.

State is the instrument of exploitation. It is a class instrument and a result of class division in society. Since there is only one class of workers in communism and no other class to suppress or oppress, there will not be any need of the state. It will become redundant in a communist society. It will be relegated to the museum. The state, however, will not be smashed; it will gradually wither away.

Communist society will be governed by the Louise Blanc principle of 'from each according to his capacity to each according to his need'. There will be no place for parasites. He who will not work will not eat also. There will be only one class of workers. The entire society will be converted into the working class. There will be no place for exploitation. It will be an egalitarian society. There will be harmonious relationship among the people.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is the theory of surplus value?

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2) Explain the concept of class struggle.

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3) Enumerate and describe the salient features of a communist society.

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26.4 THEORY OF ALIENATION

There have been two distinct phases in the Marxist philosophy. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, present the human face of Marxism. In the *Manuscripts*, capitalism has been analysed without reference to class antagonism, class struggle and violent revolution. Here, the evil influences of capitalism have been explained through alienation and loss of identity and freedom. These views of Marx have been identified with a younger Marx. There occurs an epistemological break in Marx's philosophy with the writing of *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. The later Marx is known as mature Marx, who developed the theory of scientific socialism. Marx's earlier ideas were discovered only in 1932, with the publication of the *Manuscripts*.

The theory of alienation is an important Marxian concept. The Hungarian Marxist George Lukacs had developed the theory of alienation entirely on his own even before the publication of *Manuscripts* in 1932. However, the concept of alienation became popular only after the publication of the *Manuscripts.* Marx has identified four levels of alienation. Firstly, man is alienated from his own product and from his work process, because the worker plays no part in deciding what to produce and how to produce it. Secondly, man is alienated from nature. His work does not give him a sense of satisfaction as a creative worker. Under mechanisation, work tends to become increasingly routinised and monotonous. Thirdly, man is alienated from other men. The competitive character of the capitalist system forces everyone to live at someone else's expense and divides society into antagonistic classes. Lastly, man is alienated from himself. The realm of necessity dominates his life and reduces him to the level of an animal existence, leaving no time for a taste of literature, art, and cultural heritage. The capitalist system subordinates all human faculties and qualities

to the conditions created by the private ownership of capital and property. The capitalist himself, no less than the worker, becomes a slave of the tyrannical rule of money.

26.5 THEORY OF FREEDOM

As a humanist philosophy, Marxism is primarily a philosophy of human freedom. Freedom consists not only in securing material satisfaction o f human needs, but also in removing the conditions of dehumanisation, estrangement and alienation. The capitalist system is characterised by necessity as opposed to freedom. Necessity refers to the conditions under which the inevitable laws of nature govern the life of man. These laws of nature exist independent of man's will. Man can acquire scientific knowledge of these laws, but cannot change them at his will. Freedom does not consist in an escape from necessity. Freedom lies in the knowledge of these laws of nature and the capacity to make these laws work towards the definite end of the emancipation of human society.

Thus, a sound knowledge of the productive forces operating behind the capitalist system and a programme to make these forces work toward human ends were essential instruments of human freedom. Only a programme of socialist revolution would accomplish humanity's leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom. The emancipation of human society and the realisation of true freedom is possible only with the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of communism.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss either the theory of alienation or the theory of freedom.

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26.6 A CRITICAL APPRAISAL AND AN OVERVIEW

Marxism has been subjected to severe criticism. It has simplified the class division of society into two classes, the haves and the have nots. This is far from the reality. Society is very complex and is divided into numerous groups. There is no clear cut division of classes as envisaged by Marxism. Moreover, there exists a huge middle class. Marxian thinkers predicted that with the advancement of capitalism, the middle class would disappear and merge with the proletariat class. But this has not happened so far and there is no possibility of it ever happening. Infact, the reverse has happened; the middle class has strengthened its position and increased its size. Marxists also predicted the narrowing of the capitalist class. Here again, just the opposite has happened. Instead of shrinking, the base of the capitalist class has been enlarged. Marx predicted the accumulation of capital, but there has been the dispersal of capital. The condition of the proletariat class has not deteriorated as predicted by Marx. Thus, the actual working of the capitalist system has proved the Marxist theory of classes to be wrong.

Marxists had predicted that the inherent contradictions of capitalism would lead to its collapse. But this has not happened so far. No advanced capitalist system has collapsed. Capitalism has proved its resilience. It is the socialist system, which has collapsed in various parts of the world. Capitalism has the tremendous capacity of adaptation. This is the main reason for its survival. Marx failed to assess capitalism correctly.

According to Marx, the proletarian revolution will occur only when capitalism has matured. There is no chance of the proletarian revolution occurring and succeeding in a backward feudal society. But this is exactly, what has happened in reality. Revolution has taken place only in feudal societies such as Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba etc. This was the main issue of debate between two factions of Russian Marxists, the Mensheviks led by Plekhanov and the Bolsheviks led by Lenin. Ultimately, the Bolsheviks prevailed over the Mensheviks, but the latter were closer to classical Marxist teachings. According to Marx, his teachings can lessen the birth pangs, but cannot short circuit the various stages of social evolution. However, Lenin and Trotsky in Russia and Mao in China established communism in a feudal society without going through the process of first establishing capitalism. To resolve this obvious contradiction, Trotsky developed the 'theory of Permanent Revolution'. He fused the bourgeois revolution with the proletarian revolution in his theory. These two revolutions can occur simultaneously in the view of Trotsky. Though this seems to be a more practical view, it does not confirm to the basic Marxian principles.

The Marxian theory of economic determinism has been severely criticised. It is not only the economic factor, but other factors also that are equally important in bringing about social change. If economy determines polity, society, morality, value system etc., then economy itself is shaped by these. It is a *two way* process. Economic forces are not immune to the influences of polity, society, culture, religion, values, norms etc. If the base or the substructure shapes the superstructure, then the superstructure also shapes the substructure. Thus, the theory of economic determinism cannot be accepted. Later Marxist thinkers like Gramsci accepted the important role of the superstructure.

The Marxian concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism suffer from several flaws. After the proletarian revolution, the proletariat will seize the state apparatus from the bourgeois. With the establishment of communism, the state will become redundant and will gradually wither away. This has not happened. In socialist society, the state infact became all-powerful. Instead of weakening, the state has consolidated its position and there is no possibility of its fading away. The Marxian dream of a stateless society will never be realised. The state will continue to play a leading role in a socialist and communist society and there is no possibility of it ever being relegated to the museum.

The socialist state wherever it has been established, has either been overthrown or discredited. Wherever, it is still surviving, it has been compelled to introduce wideranging changes, which do not confirm to the teachings of classical Marxism. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, disintegration of the Soviet Union and economic reforms in China have led thinkers like Francis Fukuyama to write the obituary of Marxism. Fukuyama in his famous book *End of History* proclaims the triumph of capitalism over communism in the post-cold war world. According to him, with the victory of capitalism over communism, history has come to an end. Here, Fukuyama talks of history in the Hegelean sense. After capitalism, there will be no further economic and political evolution. Capitalism is the most rational and perfect system. It is the most perfect ideology and philosophy. So ideological and philosophical evolution comes to an end with the emergence of capitalism. Its main challenger communism has been defeated and this further proves its claim that it is the best possible social, economic and political system ever evolved by humanity.

It is very difficult to accept the thesis propounded by Fukuyama. The importance of Marxism lies in two fields. Firstly, it has been used as a tool for social analysis. Secondly, it gives a voice to the voiceless. It is the philosophy of the poor, the oppressed and the suppressed people. If the contribution of Marxism is analysed in these two fields, we will reach the conclusion that it is still relevant and has not become redundant as claimed by the liberal critics. Marxism as an approach of social analysis is still relevant as it was in the past. Its importance as a method of social analysis will never diminish, irrespective of whether the socialist state survives or not.

Marxism as an ideology has definitely lost its edge, but it has not become totally redundant. As long as exploitation will continue, people will be oppressed and suppressed, Marxism will remain relevant. Marxism as a philosophy of the exploited and the oppressed will continue to inspire the masses to strive for their emancipation. So there is no question of its defeat and irrelevance. Infact the systems, which have collapsed, were not organised on classical Marxian principles. They were a variant of Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism. So it is the Leninist-Stalinist systems, which have collapsed in Europe and elsewhere and not classical Marxism.

Marxism as an approach will continue to be used by scholars for social analysis and the exploited-oppressed people will continue to espouse Marxist philosophy for their emancipation. Here, Marxism will never become irrelevant. It will always provide an alternative philosophy to liberalism. Marxism will also act as an effective check on the excesses of liberalism. It will mitigate the rigors of the capitalist system.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss the major grounds of attack on the Marxist theory.

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2) Examine the contemporary relevance of Marxism.

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26.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed various kinds of socialism such as utopian and scientific socialism, evolutionary and revolutionary socialism. The basic principles of Marxism such as dialectical materialism, historical materialism, surplus value, class straggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat, communism have been discussed in detail. These principles constitute the foundation of scientific and revolutionary socialism.

Marxism is not only the philosophy of class antagonism, class conflict, class struggle and violent revolution. It is basically a philosophy of humanism and freedom. Capitalist society has led to the estrangement, alienation and loss of identity and freedom. We find the human face of Marx in his early writings, particularly in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In the theory of alienation and freedom, we find a humanist Marx. In *the Communist Manifesto* and *Das Capital*, which are his later writings, we find a mature and revolutionary Marx. Thus, there are two Marx's, a younger and humanist Marx and a mature and revolutionary Marx. However, there is no dichotomy between the two. There is a continuity of thought between the two and so any distinction is superficial.

Marxism is a living philosophy. After Marx it has been enriched by Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Rosa Luxembourg, Gramsci, Lukacs, Althusser, Mao etc. Exponents of the end of ideology and the end of history have written off Marxism. But Marxism as an approach for social analysis and the philosophy of the oppressed class will continue to be relevant. It will inspire the masses to strive for their emancipation. Marxism is a revolutionary philosophy. It is a philosophy of social change. In the words of Marx, philosophers have sought to interpret the world; what matters, however, is to change it. It aims to establish an egalitarian society, free from exploitation of one class by another. Only through Marxism, arguably, humanity will take a leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom.

26.8 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Avineri, Shlomo, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971

Berlin, Isaiah, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996

Fukuyama, Francis, *The End of History and the Last Man,* New York, Free Press, 1992

Tucker, Robert, *Philosophy and Myth of Karl Marx*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961

McClelland, J.S., *A History of Western Political Thought,* London, Routledge, 1996

26.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERICISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See sub-sections 26.3.1 and 26.3.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) see sub-section 26.4.1

2) see sub-section 26.4.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) see sub-section 26.4.3

2) see sub-section 26.4.4

3) see sub-section 26.4.7

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) see Sections 26.5 and 26.6

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1) see Section 26.7